

Good afternoon. My name is Charles Miller. I am a resident of Clay Township located in southern St. Clair County on Lake St. Clair. I am a member of the Clay Township Board of Trustees and, for the past four years, have served in the voluntary capacity of Program Coordinator for the Clay Township Phragmites Advisory Board. Formed by resolution in 2010, the PAB is an all- volunteer self-funded effort to address the large phragmites infestation in our township.

Over the four years of activity, our permit program has grown to encompass over 300 residents and 450 acres of infestations in Clay, Algonac and neighboring IRA Township. Over 44% of our township is made up of DNR property, and we have had the benefit of close cooperation of the DNR in allowing our residents to treat not only their private land but also the adjacent infestations on the state properties, on their own nickel. We have gained a deep appreciation for the task of removing phragmites after 40 years of relative inattention. Re-establishing productivity and diversity of totally degraded acreage is daunting task, physically and economically. Going forward, we must emphasize prevention.

Our handling of the Asian Carp invasive threat will tell the tale. Let us hope that we have the cumulative political will to prevent this intrusion and thus set the standards for our future policies. We view the changes incorporated in SB 795 and 802 as necessary steps in moving this process forward.

The amendments proposed in Senate Bill 795 are clearly designed to clarify and codify stronger penalties for violations of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act for those who introduce invasive species into our State. SB 795 represents a careful re-examination of our existing law and, where necessary, it adds strengthening to our enforcement provisions. These changes are essential to support expanded and more aggressive future policy decisions. We believe this action demonstrates the enhanced commitment of both the Governor and the Legislature to address the specter of catastrophic damage from potential invasive species such as Asian Carp. I make specific reference here to the David Costner case in 2012 concerning the selling of Grass Carp for pond control in Michigan.

In closing, we raise a cautionary question; Are we prepared to build a more holistic educational and enforcement infrastructure necessary to fully implement this tightened penalty provisions? The public at large is generally unaware of the depth and breadth of the invasive species

problem, other than press coverage and selected targeted pamphlets. Efforts must be made educate our residents with facts on the LAW. For instance, targeted education at the local level on such definitions as 'prohibited species' and 'restricted species' and the respective penalties attendant to illegal activities under each definition will sensitize our citizens to the specifics of the legal implications concerning invasive species. In Clay Township, we have experience in engaging, educating and empowering our citizens, and it works.

Lastly, let us overcome the budgetary constraints of the past and restore a strong and effective enforcement team for both invasive prevention and poaching. We believe this strong holistic approach will send a clear message that Michigan has the political will to make the hard decisions necessary to protect our State from threats to our environmental integrity.

*[www.claytownship.org/phragmites](http://www.claytownship.org/phragmites)*